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Cambodia: Phnom Penh has released some arms and ammunition to the Vietnamese Communists. (Page 3)



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[redacted]

Cambodia: Phnom Penh has released some arms and ammunition to the Vietnamese Communists, and may have made other concessions to Hanoi.

Some 80 tons of arms were delivered to Communist forces at the South Vietnamese border in late September,

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[redacted]

the deliveries were made as a result of promises Sihanouk made to North Vietnamese leaders. Sihanouk is said to have agreed to release all arms and other supplies that have been stored in Cambodian warehouses since he embargoed the supply flow last May.

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The 80-ton shipment represents only a small portion of the arms Phnom Penh is holding. The delivery is apparently designed to test whether the Vietnamese Communists are willing to abide by their promises to limit activities on Cambodian soil. A token delivery might also lessen, at least temporarily, the pressures the Cambodians probably feel themselves under from both the North Vietnamese and the Chinese. The questions of arms deliveries and the Communists' presence in Cambodia probably were the major subjects during recent discussions between Lon Nol and North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong in Peking. Sihanouk has indicated in public remarks that those talks did not go well.

In a possibly related development, Phnom Penh has asked the International Control Commission (ICC) to terminate its activities in Cambodia as soon as possible. In addition to citing the financial burdens of supporting the ICC operation, Phnom Penh indicated that border problems could now be dealt with on a "bilateral basis" with the Vietnamese Communists.

The timing and rationale of Phnom Penh's action raises the possibility that the impetus may have come from Hanoi. In past years, the ICC has helped serve

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[Cambodian and Communist interests by conducting "investigations" in border areas as well as in the port of Sihanoukville that have whitewashed Vietnamese Communist activities. The ICC has also been frequently pressed into service by Phnom Penh to help publicize allied violations of Cambodian territory.

[It is possible, however, that North Vietnam now believes there is some utility in getting Phnom Penh to dismantle an international investigatory body that could conceivably be the nucleus for future expanded supervision in the vital South Vietnamese - Cambodian border area. For his part, Sihanouk has long believed that the ICC has been rendered all but useless by the obstructionism of the Indian and Polish representatives. He might believe that sending the ICC packing is a small price to pay for Communist concessions on other issues.

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